

Forest clearance for Puri airport

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Bhubaneswar: The Centre has granted stage-1 (in-principle) approval for diversion of forest land for the construction of the proposed Shree Jagannath International Airport in Puri, clearing a major hurdle to the project.

However, the Opposition Congress on Saturday voiced concern over the airport's location.

Puri collector Dibya Jyoti Parida said: "We have received the approval. But there are many clauses in it, like afforestation, that we need to fulfil."

In a letter to the principal secretary (forests), government of Odisha, the ministry of environment, forest and

climate change said: "After careful consideration of the proposal of the Government of Odisha and on the basis of recommendations of the Advisory Committee and approval of the same by the competent authority of MoEFCC, New Delhi, the Central government hereby accords in-principle or stage-1 approval under Section 2 (i) (iii) of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980, for diversion of 27.887 hectares of DLC forest land for construction of Shree Jagannath International Airport under Puri Forest Division."

DLC forest land refers to land identified by the district-level committee as having forest-like characteristics

such as natural vegetation or tree cover.

The proposal for the airport was examined by the advisory committee under the Act on February 27, 2026. "After detailed evaluation and recommendation, the competent authority granted stage-1 approval," a senior official said.

The proposed airport is expected to significantly enhance direct connectivity between the pilgrimage town of Puri and other parts of the country.

However, the Congress raised objections. Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee president Bhakta Charan Das said: "If the airport comes up at the proposed site near the

town, it will adversely impact the climate, the ecosystem and existing structures in Puri. The landing of large aircraft with high noise levels will also have a negative effect. The site should be shifted 25 to 30 kilometres away. We will not allow the airport to come up in Puri."

The Shree Jagannath Airport will be developed over 1,164 acres at an estimated cost of ₹5,631 crore. "The construction will take place in three phases. Once complete, it will have the capacity to handle 4.6 million passengers annually," a source in the chief minister's office said.

The airport will be built at Sipasarubali, about 10km from the Puri sea beach.